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Where Restraint Begins

AS THIS newspaper has made plain, it is prepared to support any reasonable plan for restraint in the publication of security information. Our reaction to President Kennedy's suggestion that the press has a responsibility to fulfill in this area is affirmative.

At the same time, much of the Government's trouble in excessive disclosure of military information is of its own making. If the military will not button its lip, it is futile to ask the newspapers to exercise discretion. The soldiers, and sailors, and airmen and their civilian colleagues supposedly are in the best position to know what should and shouldn't be discussed.

A case in point involves the May issue of the Military Review, an official publication of the Army's General Staff School. It reported identification of 37 Soviet missile launching sites and 14 Soviet missile and rocket factories. It stated that "because of a tight Soviet control over military information, this data is derived from sources which are not necessarily accurate or complete." Later, under fire, Pentagon officials dismissed the article as a compilation of press reports.

In the U.S. press? A collection of military leaks, do they mean? Sen. Stuart Symington says that if the information is correct, it does not jibe with what the Central Intelligence Agency has told Congress. And if it's incorrect, he asks, "why... spend the taxpayers' money to mislead the American people by putting it out at all?" Add that it seems silly to tell the Russians what we know (or don't know) about their rocket sites and factories.

It is about time, we think, that some logical guidelines be established. The press picked up the Military Review article's statements. Then they were justified by the Pentagon as a collection of press reports. The thing goes around in a circle—the shape of blabbermouths in the service.